

VZCZCXRO6872  
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHCO #0278 1871001  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 061001Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1003  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 1314  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0315  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1476  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0448

UNCLAS COTONOU 000278

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/ (W ACOOK), G/TIP (VZEITLIN), AND INL  
LONDON FOR PETER LORD  
PARIS FOR BKANEDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [ELAB](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: POLICE INTERCEPTS 11 ALLEGED TRAFFICKING VICTIMS IN  
TRANSIT TO NIGERIA

11. SUMMARY: On June 20, 2009, Beninese Security Forces intercepted a vehicle in Cotonou transporting eleven children from the Togo-Benin border to be allegedly trafficked to Lagos, Nigeria. On June 22, 2009, the Minors' Protection Brigade (BPM) interviewed the alleged traffickers and the victims and referred them to the Court of Cotonou for further legal action. END SUMMARY.

12. On June 20, 2009, officers of the Dantopka's Police Station, in Cotonou, intercepted a car transporting eleven Togolese children who had entered Benin at Hillacondji, the Benin-Togo border station. The car was passing through Cotonou, en route to the Nigerian border, when the police stopped it. The police handed over the eleven allegedly trafficked children, the suspected trafficker (a Togolese woman), and the driver to the BPM.

13. On June 22, 2009, the BPM interviewed the two suspects and the eleven children. The Head of the BPM, Commissioner Louis Tokpanou, told Post that the woman claimed she was accompanying the children to Lagos where they would spend holidays with their respective relatives, a piece of information confirmed by the children. She said that she was acquainted with only eight of the children, but a friend asked her to take the three other children to Lagos as well. Tokpanou said that some of the rescued children had ID cards, which made identification easier. Following the interception of the alleged victims, individuals of Nigerian nationality rushed in to the BPM and claimed that they were the children's relatives living in Lagos.

14. After the interview phase, the BPM referred the children, the persons claiming to be the children's relatives, the Togolese woman, and the driver to the prosecutor at Cotonou's Court for further action. It then sent the alleged victims to the Cotonou based Swiss NGO Terre des Hommes shelter, for care. Tokpanou says he can not assert that the case constitutes a child-trafficking without further investigation by the prosecutor.

15. Commissioner Topkanou briefed the press on the case. Initial media reaction suggested that the suspected woman was a known child-trafficker.

BOUSTANI